

SOMERS STRIKES BUT BLUES ARE LOOKING GOOD

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Wimbledon 2

KEIRON SOMERS, one of the best target men in amateur soccer, headed home a 84th minute goal to clinch Southern Leaguers Wimbledon a 2-1 victory over Wycombe Wanderers in Wednesday night's "friendly" at Loakes Park.

I use the term friendly loosely, for this was more like a vital league match. Wimbledon, with three of last year's Walton and Hershaw team in their ranks plus Roger Connell and Somers, were a hard and physical side and went at Wycombe from the word go. Local referee Bill Cleere had his work cut out to keep a firm hand on the match and had this not been a pre-season warm up, he would have undoubtedly have had his book out on at least one occasion.

Wanderers, having beaten an Oxford United XI on Monday, made several changes to try out the other members of their squad. Into the side came Johnny Hutchinson, Paul Griffiths and goalkeeper Paul Barron, who have all played for the Blues in the past, while big Mick Chatterton, the former Slough top goalscorer, wore the Wycombe shirt for the first time.

With Alan Phillips watching from the sidelines, Dave Bullock returned to his best position of centre back while Hutchinson teamed up with Howard Kennedy and Terry Reardon in midfield. Steve Perrin, Chatterton and Tony Horseman made up the front three.

SOMETHING EXTRA

From the outset it was obvious Wycombe would have to produce something extra to beat a Wimbledon side at full strength. And to begin with, things went well for them. Hutchinson, in particular, caught the eye in the opening exchanges but it was Wimbledon who produced the first close shave of the game after 14 minutes. Their former Colchester winger Mick Mahon, still a very fine player, crossed over for Connell but the latter headed over the top.

There was another anxious moment for the Blues when Mead almost headed over 'keeper Barron with Somers closing in but Kennedy soon had the Wycombe crowd on their feet when he surprised everyone except goalkeeper Guy with a dipping volley out of the blue from 30 yards.

In the 26th minute, from Wanderers' first corner, Chatterton showed some of his power by heading on Horseman's flag kick for Reardon to drive just over but Wimbledon hit back with their first corner a minute later. The ball was half cleared out to Dave Bassett, who curled a deliberate shot over Barron's despairing leap to put the Dons one up. Barron was only a few yards off his line but those yards made all the difference.

With more power upfront and more room in which to work, Somers and Connell always looked likely to break through and despite sound defensive work from Mead and Bullock, Somers' height gave him the edge in the aerial exchanges. With Mahon providing the crosses regularly, these two should score a host of goals in the

Southern League this season.

Mahon gave young full back Paul Griffiths a torrid time on the flanks and it was no surprise when manager Brian Lee brought on the more experienced Phil Wood after 34

By STUART EARP

minutes to take over. Horseman and Kennedy both went close before the interval but after 45 minutes, Wimbledon still held their one goal advantage.

John Maskell, last year's regular goalkeeper, replaced Barron for the second half and turned in an excellent performance. John was non-too-safe last term but on this showing, he is still Wycombe's best bet for the 'keeper's shirt.

Again Wanderers looked the better side at the start of the half and after 55 minutes they pulled back to level the scores.

The goal, a penalty, brought fierce protests from Wimbledon although there was little doubt about the decision in my mind. Tony Horseman was running into the penalty area when Billy Edwards hauled him back. Horseman drove home the spot kick with real confidence. Soon afterwards, Bullock came off, Wood moved to centre back and Graham Mackenzie slotted into midfield.

On the hour, Maskell produced two fine saves — the second a particularly brilliant effort — from Connell. The first came when Connell slipped Mead and shot for the near post, Maskell tipping the ball around the post for a corner. From the flag kick the ball came out to Connell again and he caught the ball superbly on the volley only to see Maskell get his fingers to the ball and push it onto the post. Connell looked up to the heavens in disbelief.

Richard Wilke's replaced Perrin, who had a highly promising match, in the 67th minute and two minutes later Kennedy almost put Wycombe ahead with a great piece of anticipation. A Wimbledon defender, under pressure, tried to pass back to his goalkeeper. Kennedy spotted the move and intercepted but Guy produced a reaction save to smother the shot.

PERFECT TACKLE

From a Wycombe corner seconds later Mead headed the ball perfectly with full power but Edwards stuck out a boot to clear off the line. Then at the other end Mahon put Connell clean through the home defence but Birdseye, who looked a vastly better player than last season, raced back and timed his tackle to perfection.

By this stage the game was growing extremely physical with players protesting at almost every decision from the referee.

Then, in the 84th minute,

Wimbledon snatched a neat winner. Somers was the scorer, soaring between two defenders to nod home Geoff Bryant's cross.

Chatterton went close when he picked up Edward's pass back and clipped the ball just wide of the far post with Guy beaten, but overall, the burly striker failed to make a big imp-pression. A player who can be deadly in slower conditions, he found the speed of Wycombe's build-ups a little too much for him.

Considering Wycombe were trying out new players and made several substitutions throughout the match, this was a creditable performance against top opposition. Once again Kennedy looked good, although he tends to fade towards the later stages of a game, while Perrin, Horseman Maskell and Birdseye promised much for the new season.

On their two showings, Wanderers have a good deal of talent at their disposal. The most difficult job will be sorting them out into a team.

WYCOMBE: P. Barron (sub J. Maskell 45 mins); P. Griffiths (sub P. Wood 38 mins); K. Mead, D. Bullock (sub G. Mackenzie 55 mins); P. Birdseye; H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, J. Hutchinson (sub S. Perrin 86 mins); A. Horseman, M. Chatterton, S. Perrin (sub R. Wilke 67 mins).

WIMBLEDON: D. Guy; R. Stockley (sub D. Cummings 73 mins); G. Bryant, D. Donaldson, W. Edwards; D. Bassett, D. Lucas, S. Rice; R. Connell, K. Somers, M. Mahon. Subs M. Parker, M. Heath (not used).

Referee: W. Cleere (Downley).



STEVE PERRIN
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